

SHINING TIME STATION

"EL SCHEMO"

BY

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**From characters and storylines created by
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**FIRST DRAFT
AUGUST 31, 1992**

SCENE 1
(MAINSET)

(DAYTIME. SOME DISGRUNTLED PASSENGERS MILL AROUND NEAR THE PLATFORM, WAITING TO GO. AT MAIN DESK, STACY PICKS UP A DESK MICROPHONE, INTONES FORMALLY.)

STACY:

May I ...
(taps broken mike)
May I have your attention
...

(SHE TAPS IT AGAIN, THEN GIVES UP.
SHE WALKS OUT TO GROUP.)

STACY (CONT'D):

Everybody? I'm sorry,
but the trains still
aren't coming through.

(PASSENGERS REACT, EXASPERATED.)

PASSENGER 1:

What's the problem?
Don't tell me those great
big choo-choo trains
can't run in a little
cold weather.

STACY:

The trains are fine. But
this frost took us all by
surprise. The switches
along the tracks are
frozen stiff.

PASSENGER 2:

So what do we do? Wait a
week until the weather
warms up?

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

STACY:

People up and down the line are working on the problem. When the switches are shifting properly, we'll be up and running again. Meanwhile, thank you for your patience.

(SHE SMILES, RETURNS TO DESK.
PASSENGERS REACT, GO TO BENCHES,
OPEN NEWSPAPERS, ETC., AS ON
PLATFORM ENTRANCE --)

(SCHEMER APPEARS, LADEN WITH OLD SCARVES, GLOVES, ETC...)

SCHEMER:

Did somebody say "cold"?
Did somebody say bitter-wintry-freezing-frigid
bite-your-toesies-off cold?

(HE HUSTLES DOWN TO PASSENGERS.)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

See Schemer. And get ready for his quality line of first-rate quality cold weather merchandise.

(unfurls ratty scarf)
TA-DAAAA!

(HE SEES ITS HOLES, ETC., AND QUICKLY GETS RID OF IT.)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

Not ta-daa that. That's one of my test models.
Ta-daa...this!

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

(HE PULLS OUT ANOTHER, UNFURLS IT
-- MORE HOLES. HE THROWS IT OVER
HIS SHOULDER AND RUMMAGES THROUGH
HIS STOCK AS --)

(OFF PLATFORM, DAN ENTERS, RUBBING
HANDS, CROSSES TO STACY AT DESK.)

DAN:

Wow, Aunt Stacy, what's
that cool gun Billy's
shooting at the tracks?

STACY:

A blow torch, Dan. He's
trying to thaw out the
switches.. As long as
they're frozen, the
trains can't use the
sidings, or reverse
directions -- they can't
even get out of each
other's way.

DAN:

He should use the blow
torch on the platform,
too. It's all icy.

STACY:

We'll use salt for that.
Maybe we should use the
passengers. They're all
getting hot under the
collar.

(AT PLATFORM, GINNY APPEARS,
EXULTANT. SHE SPOTS SCHEMER, STILL
WORKING THE CROWD. SHE CROSSES TO
HIM.)

SCHEMER:

But look at this. One
hundred percent wool, not
counting the non-wool
components --

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

GINNY:

There he is. Schemer,
you prognosticating
genius, you.

(SHE GIVES HIM A HUG AND KISSES HIM
ON THE CHEEK. HE'S STUNNED.)

SCHEMER:

Uh, Ginny ...

GINNY:

I just love this man.
And so do my tomatoes.

(STACY AND DAN SEE THIS, GO OVER TO
WATCH, UNDER --)

SCHEMER:

Ladies and gentlemen,
Ginny of Farmer's Dell.
Another satisfied
customer of Schemer
Winter Wear.

GINNY:

Winter wear my foot,
Schemer. I want to thank
you for saving my
beefsteak crop with that
miracle gizmo of yours.

SCHEMER:

Huh? I mean, which
miracle gizmo are you
referring to.

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

GINNY:

(POINTS TO ARCADE.)

That fortune telling machine. I stopped by yesterday on the way back to Dell, popped in a nickel to kill some time, and got the lowdown skinny from the Great Beyond.

(SHE PRODUCES A SMALL SLIP OF PAPER, HOLDS IT OUT. STACY TAKES, READS ALOUD AS PASSENGERS GATHER AND LISTEN IN.)

STACY:

"A sudden change in the weather. Take steps to avert disaster."

GINNY:

Which I did. Not that I'm superstitious. But I looked at those tomatoes, hangin' on the vines out there, and I figured, what the hey. So I covered 'em with burlap, fired up the smoke pots, and boom.

SCHEMER:

Boom? I mean, how "boom"?

GINNY:

Boom comes this frost! Tomatoes all over the Valley are freezing up and hangin' there like Christmas tree bulbs. But my little beauties are nice and soft. When the weather turns back, they'll come in red and ready.

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

Ginny, let me see if I have this straight. You're saying my machine predicted the future?

GINNY:

That's the deal from my end.

(PASSENGERS BURST INTO EXCITED CHATTER WHILE SCHEMER REACTS.)

DAN:

Can a machine really tell the future?

STACY:

Of course not. It was a coincidence

SCHEMER:

Coincidence? Tell that to Ginny's tomatoes!

STACY:

Oh, come on, Schemer. The machine happened to say the weather would change, and in this case, it did. It was luck.

SCHEMER:

Miss Jones, I think I speak for myself, and Ginny, and these wonderful people here, when I tell you that I am deeply offended. I bring into Shining Time Station a Machine that can predict the future, and you sneer. You sneer and jeer. Shame on you.

(PASSENGERS NOD.)

SCENE 1 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

And hurray for me!

(PASSENGERS CHEER.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the machine awaits. Who wants to try?

(PASSENGERS YELL AND WAVE AS SCHEMER AND GINNY LEAD THEM TO ARCADE, WHERE THEY LINE UP AT MACHINE AS STACY SHRUGS AT DAN.)

DAN:

Shouldn't we try to stop them?

STACY:

People have a right to believe silly things. What makes me nervous is, if they start believing Schemer's machine, they may start believing Schemer.

DAN:

That's impossible! Nobody really believes Schemer. (beat) Do they?

(STACY MERELY GESTURES "VOILA!" CUT TO ARCADE, WHERE PASSENGERS ARE ANXIOUS TO USE MACHINE, AND SCHEMER IS SLAPPING BACKS, SHAKING HANDS, ETC . . .)

SCENE 2
(INT. JUKE BOX)

(TITO'S VAULT. TITO IS ON LADDER,
LOOKING INTO PIGGY BANK EXCITEDLY.
ELEVATOR LOWERS INTO VIEW AND DIDI
STEPS OUT.)

DIDI:

Hey, Tito --

TITO:

I know! The trains
can't run, so the
passengers are hanging
out in the station. And
that means they're
putting money in the
juke box, right?

DIDI:

Wrong.

TITO:

We gotta get upstairs to
play, right?

DIDI:

Wrong.

TITO:

They probably got ten
different songs they want
to hear, right?

DIDI:

Wrong ten times! They're
not putting money in the
juke box. They're
putting money into
Schemer's fortune
telling machine.

TITO:

What? that piece of
junk!

SCENE 2 (CONT'D)

DIDI:

Schemer told them it can
really tell the future.

TITO:

But that's wrong!

DIDI:

Right.

(ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSES; ELEVATOR
GOES UP AS TITO MOANS AND SHAKES
HIS HEAD.)

SCENE 3
(INT. ARCADE)

(DAN WORRIEDLY WATCHES AS THE PASSENGERS PUT MONEY IN THE FORTUNE TELLER AND RECEIVE THEIR FORTUNES AS SCHEMER SMILES.)

PASSENGER 1:
(reading fortune)

"Good news from a trusted advisor. Be prepared to act on it."

SCHEMER:

Uh, yes, the trusted advisor is ... the machine! So to get some good news, get back in line and put in another nickel!

(PASSENGER 1 NODS, GETS BACK IN LINE.)

PASSENGER 2:
(reading)

"Financial windfall from long-cultivated source. Keep lines of communication open." What on earth does that mean?

SCENE 3 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:
(takes fortune)

No problem... "Financial windfall means, uh, money will, will fall out of the sky... "Cultivated source" means, uh, your garden, stuff like that. "Keep lines of communication open..." Okay, what this means is, when you get home, go out to your garden, stand under the telephone wires, and money will fall from the sky and hit you on the head.

PASSENGER 2:

Hey, that sounds great!
Thanks!

SCHEMER:

Don't mention it.
(to himself)
It could happen.

(DAN REACTS TO THIS, BUT IS DISTRACTED BY --)

(AT BILLY'S WORKSHOP, MR. CONDUCTOR APPEARS.)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Psst! Dan!

(HE MOTIONS FOR DAN TO JOIN HIM.
DAN CROSSES TO --)

(INTERIOR OF BILLY'S WORKSHOP -- DAN JOINS MR. CONDUCTOR AND KARA, WHO IS TAKING OFF HER COAT, GLOVES, HAT, ETC.)

SCENE 3 (CONT'D)

KARA:

It is freezing! I was helping Billy but I had to come in. My nose is turning to ice.

MR. CONDUCTOR:

I've been helping out up and down the line too.. When somebody isn't looking, and reaches for a tool, and its a little closer then he thinks it is? That's me. I push it over, it's the least I can do, considering ...

DAN:

Considering what, Mr. Conductor?

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Considering that I know the person who's responsible for this cold. I asked him not to do it, but he never listens.

KARA:

Who?

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Jack Frost. You know.
The winter guy.

DAN:

Well, thanks to him, everybody thinks Schemer can see the future. Or his machine can, anyway. Ginny got a fortune that said, look out for bad weather, and now it came true.

SCENE 3 (CONT'D)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Oh, that was a coincidence. Jack has this planned a long time ago. You know, it's funny. He loves to confuse people with cold weather, but personally he's really a very warm individual ...

(KARA IS AT DOOR, LOOKING OUT AT STATION.)

KARA:

Right now he could be Schemer's best friend.

(ANGLE ON WORKSHOP DOOR - KARA, DAN AND MR. CONDUCTOR PEEK OUT AT ARCADE WHERE SCHEMER CONSULTS WITH A CUSTOMER RE: HIS FORTUNE.)

SCHEMER:

"An investment in the arts brings ample benefits..." Yeah, that means, um -- of course! Talk about obvious. It means, put all your money into music--
(points)
-- there! In the juke box!

(CUSTOMER NODS, HEADS FOR JUKE BOX AS DAN, KARA AND MR. CONDUCTOR TRADE A LOOK.)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Things may be getting out of hand. I'd better have a little chat with Jack Frost before Schemer takes over the world.

(HE DISAPPEARS)

SCENE 4
(INT. JUKE BOX)

(MAIN PERFORMANCE AREA -- THE PUPPETS ARE READY TO GO. DIDI IS MIFFED.)

TITO:

Here they come, children!
Beaucoup nickels and how!

DIDI:

That Schemer! He wouldn't know the truth if it slapped him in the face.

REX:

Maybe. But some people will believe anything, tight, Tex?

TEX:

As long as it's what they want to hear, Rex.

DIDI:

That doesn't make it right.

GRACE:

Can we discuss this later, y'all? Right now we have a job to do. Namely, (song title).

SCENE 5

PUPPET SONG.

(INTERCUT: INTERIOR ARCADE --
SCURRIES TO REAR OF FORTUNE
MACHINE, WITHDRAWS LITTLE POT OF
NICKELS AND GLEEFULLY LAUGHS AS HE
DUMPS THEM IN HIS POCKET.)

SCENE 6
(MAIN SET)

(OFF PLATFORM, MIDGE SMOOT HUSTLES IN AND RUNS TO MAIN DESK, WHERE STACY IS TRYING TO DO PAPERWORK DESPITE THE UPROAR AT THE ARCADE.)

MIDGE:

Where is he, Stacy?

STACY KEEPS HER EYES ON HER PAPERWORK, BUT SILENTLY POINTS TO ARCADE. MIDGE, HOWEVER, IS SO BESIDE HERSELF SHE DOESN'T SEE.)

MIDGE (CONT'D):

I have just heard the most fantastic, amazing, incredible rumor -- so of course I believed it immediately. Because some things are so unbelievable, you just have to believe them. Now where is the amazing Schemer?

(SHE LOOKS AT STACY, WHO CONTINUES TO POINT BUT DOES NOT LOOK UP. MIDGE DOESN'T SEE THE POINTING HAND, AND RAPS THE DESK IMPATIENTLY.)

MIDGE (CONT'D):

Hello? Madame Station Manager? Is anybody home?

(STACY JABS HER FINGER TOWARD THE ARCADE. MIDGE FINALLY SEES IT, TURNS, AND FOLLOWS UNTIL SHE SEES CROWD AT ARCADE.)

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

MIDGE (CONT'D):

He must be in that crowd.
Thanks.

(beat, indignant)
And you don't have to
point so loud. I can
hear you.

(beat, reverie)
Just think. Schemer can
predict the future. And
I thought he was barely
able to predict his own
name.

STACY:

Nobody can predict the
future, Midge. His
fortune telling machine
got lucky, and now
everybody thinks he has
special powers.

(ANGLE ON PLATFORM. SCHEMER,
DRESSED IN TURBAN AND ROBE,
APPEARS. HE SETS UP A LITTLE
PORTABLE TAPE MACHINE NEARBY, HAS
BASKET OF FORTUNE COOKIES IN OTHER
HAND.)

SCHEMER:

And now ... the man with
special powers. The man
who Sees All. The man
who can tell fortunes the
way other men tell
jokes ... let's have a
warm round of Shining
Times Station applause
for the great ... El
Schemo.

(HE TURNS ON THE TAPE PLAYER AND
CHEESY "MYSTERIOUS" MUSIC STARTS.
HE SWEEPS OVER THE ARCADE WITH THE
COOKIES. MIDGE SWOONS, FOLLOWS.)

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

MIDGE:

Schemer --

SCHEMER:

Ah-ah! Midge Smoot! You
weren't listening. You
may address me as ...
(salaams)
... El Schemo.

MIDGE:

El Schemo? Well, it
sounds like a city in
California, but have it
your way. Just tell me:
are you on the level?

SCHEMER:

On the level? My dear
quaint small-town
busybody, El Schemo is on
a level above that of
mere mortals. Am I not
He who Sees and Knows?

MIDGE:

He who seizes the nose?

SCHEMER:

He who sneezes through
the nose. But seriously

--

(draws her close)
For years I have
dedicated my life to the
pure pursuit of one
ideal. And that is --

MIDGE:

Wisdom?

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

-- money. But all that is over now. I have found my true calling, my mission, my sacred cause. I look into the future. And I tell fortunes ... for the unfortunate. How do I do it?

(STACY HAS EDGED OVER AND NOW TAKES SOME COOKIES FROM THE BASKET. JUST BEFORE SHE OPENS ONE, SHE SPEAKS SARCASTICALLY.)

STACY:

I can't imagine.

SCHEMER:

I join in the cosmic dance of the universe. The dancing cosmic energy of time particles and space particles and cosmic dance particles.

STACY:

And after you dance with the particles, you write down the future in these cookies?

SCHEMER:

What's it to ya?

STACY:

(reading)

"You will spend your money in Schemer's Arcade." "You must spend your nickels in the Arcade." "Spend, spend, spend like mad in Schemer's Arcade."

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

The future speaks!

MIDGE:

Talk to me, future, talk
to me!

(HE TAKES MIDGE'S ELBOW TO STEER
HER AWAY.)

SCHEMER:

Come Midge Smoot. I
sense a negative
vibration in the
neighborhood.

(STACY STOMPS DOWN ON HIS ROBE,
STOPPING IN HIS TRACKS.)

STACY:

Schemer, this is the most
outrageous stunt you have
ever pulled. These
people trust you, and you
are cheating them out of
their money.

SCHEMER:

Who dares to mouth off to
El Schemo?

STACY:

The passengers in this
station are my
responsibility. I'm
going to tell them the
truth.

(SCHEMER LEADS HER OFF TO THE SIDE.
HE WHISPERS URGENTLY.)

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

Are you crazy, Miss Jones? This is the scam of my life! People are giving me money just because I tell them to! I should have thought of this ten years ago!

STACY:

You're betraying their trust in you.

SCHEMER:

I'm cashing in on their silliness!

STACY:

A lie is a lie. I'm going to tell them you're a fraud.

(THE PASSENGERS ARE GETTING RESTLESS, AND START CHANTING.)

PASSENGERS:

Sche-mo! Sche-mo!
(etc...)

(SCHEMER SALAAMS TOWARD THEM, BUT STACY CALLS OUT.)

STACY:

This is all a fake! He can't predict the future!
Don't waste your money!

PASSENGER 1:

How do you know?

PASSENGER 2:

What about the tomatoes?

(SCHEMER TURNS, GLOATING, TO STACY.)

SCHEMER:

There's no law against
telling a bunch of
suckers what they want to
hear.

(TURNS TO CROWD.)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

El Schemo ... will speak!

(THE PASSENGERS CHEER.)

STACY:

I think they're just
bored. Once the trains
start running again, all
your so-called followers
will disappear.

SCHEMER:

That's right. And
they'll tell their
friends. And each new
train will bring a fresh
load of customers!

(HE WAVES TO CROWD AS HE RETURNS TO
ARCADE. STACY FOLLOWS, SCOWLING,
AND SHUTS OFF TAPE MACHINE.)

(ANGLE ON ARCADE, SCHEMER HAS SET
UP A PSEUDO-ORNATE THRONE, WHICH HE
MOVES TO IN GREAT POMP. HE SITS AS
CROWD GATHERS AROUND. HE SIGNALS
FOR SILENCE, SHUTS HIS EYES, AND
INTONES.)

SCHEMER:

El Schemo is receiving
emanations from the
future. The trains --

(MOCK HORROR)

Oh no! Say it isn't so,
future!

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

PASSENGERS:

What? What is it?
(etc...)

SCHEMER:

All the trains will
derail! All passengers
should take the bus!

(THE CROWD STARTS TO MOVES AS ONE
TOWARD THE PLATFORM.)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

But first -- Hey, hold
it!

(CROWD STOPS, LOOKS BACK.)

But first, you should
give all your train fare
to -- El Schemo!

(THE CROWD OBEDIENTLY RETURNS TO
HIM. HE GESTURES TOWARD VASE AT
HIS FEET, INTO WHICH CROWD STARTS
DUMPING ITS MONEY. HE LOOKS OVER
AT THIN-LIPPED STACY, AND SMIRKS.)

(AT FORTUNE MACHINE, MIDGE GETS A
FORTUNE, READS, FROWNS.)

MIDGE:

"Your home is your
domain. Nature will
submit to your design."
Is that so...?

(ANGEL ON SCHEMER -- HE GIGGLES AT
ALL THE MONEY AS MIDGE ARRIVES.)

MIDGE:

Look here, Schemerino, or
whatever your name is.

(HANDS HIM FORTUNE.)

Does this mean what I
think it means?

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:
(reads, cautious)

Maybe.

MIDGE:

I've got a stand of poison ivy out back that's been driving me crazy. What this tells me is, I should go tear that stuff apart with my bare hands and show it who's boss! Now is that right?

SCHEMER:
(beat, smiles)

Why not?

STACY:

Midge! Don't!

MIDGE:

Hot dog! 'Scuse me,
Stacy.

(SHE LEAVES ON THE RUN. AT THE PLATFORM, SHE PASSES GINNY, WHO IS LEADING THE MAYOR IN.)

MAYOR:

Ginny, I'm not sure about this. Sometimes I think Man wasn't meant to know the future and neither was I.

GINNY:

You owe it to the town,
Mayor Flopdinger.

(SHE LEADS HIM INTO THE CROWD,
MOVING PEOPLE ASIDE.)

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

GINNY (CONT'D):

Excuse us ... got the
Mayor coming through here
... Gang way for His
Honor ...

(THEY REACH SCHEMER WHO BEAMS
COCKILY.)

SCHEMER:

Well well, Mister Mayor,
what can I do for you?

MAYOR:

Don't you know already?

(TO GINNY)

I thought he can see the
future. I don't like
this.

(HE STARTS TO LEAVE.)

SCHEMER:

I knew you were going to
say that!

MAYOR:

(STOPS)

You did?

SCHEMER:

Yeah. Sort of.

GINNY:

The Mayor has an
important question.

(TO MAYOR)

Go on.

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

MAYOR:

Oh very well. Mr.
Schemer --

SCHEMER:

El Schemo's here for you,
sir.

MAYOR:

Eskimos? Here? Is it
that cold? Well I can't
see them now.

SCHEMER:

Uhm Your Honor, El Schemo
is me.

MAYOR:

Really, I had no idea.
Anyway. How can I get
the Town Council to vote
to put a pay phone next
to the fountain in the
park where I eat my
lunch? So far they
refuse to do it.

STACY:

But the fountain is very
nice. Putting a phone
next to it would look
kind of odd.

MAYOR:

Because, Miss Jones, when
I examine my sandwich
every day, I often have
to call my wife and ask
her what exactly is in
it. When I eat in the
park, I have to walk
all the way over to
Bangfusser's Hardware to
find a phone. Well, Mr.
Eskimo?

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:
(concentrates hard)

Just a moment ... it's coming to me -- Ah yes. Mr. Mayor, you tell the Council that if they don't vote to permit that phone, they can't come to your birthday party.

MAYOR:
(shocked)

Oh, dear. That's rather extreme. Well it work?

SCHEMER:

It works with me. I predict it will work like a charm.

GINNY:

And he knows, Your Honor. Remember how he saved my tomatoes.

MAYOR:

Yes, so he did. Well, I don't like having to play hardball like that, but ... yes, I'll take it under advisement. Thank you.

(HE AND GINNY START TO LEAVE.)

GINNY:

One more thing, El Schemer. Should I buy that used truck I've been looking at?

SCHEMER:

Definitely.

SCENE 6 (CONT'D)

STACY:

Wait a minute. Who's supposed to be able to see the future? Schemer, or the fortune teller?

SCHEMER:

Miss Jones, at this point, the answer is both. Man and machine have become one.

STACY:

(to others)

You mustn't listen to him!
This is all a big fraud!

GINNY:

Many thanks, El. See you all later.

(GINNY AND THE MAYOR LEAVE AS STACY WATCHES HELPLESSLY. SHE GLARES AT SCHEMER, THEN COLLECTS HERSELF AND WORDLESSLY CROSSES TO BILLY'S WORKSHOP. SCHEMER CHUCKLES AS THE CROWD AGAIN GATHERS AROUND HIM.)

SCENE 7
(INT WORKSHOP)

(A BIT LATER, STACY, DAN AND KARA ARE IN CONFERENCE. ALL LOOK GLUM.)

KARA:

I think Schemer is starting to really believe all this.

STACY:

What's going to happen when somebody takes his advice about something important?

(ALL THREE SIGH AT ONCE.)

(MR. CONDUCTOR APPEARS, FREEZING. HE STOMPS AROUND TO WARM UP AS THE OTHERS GIVE LACKLUSTER GREETING.)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Boy, you three look as low as the temperature.

DAN:

Schemer's still at it,
Mr. Conductor.

MR. CONDUCTOR:

I know. And Jack Frost thinks it's hilarious! He says watching all these people falling for Schemer's story is even more fun than watching cars skid on ice.

STACY:

If only the trains would start running again. Then everyone would leave and this whole thing would fade away.

SCENE 7 (CONT'D)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

They've got train
problems on the Isle of
Sodor, too. But I
suppose no one wants to
hear about that...

(BEAT. DAN AND KARA LOOK AT HIM.)

DAN:

Of course we do!

(HE NODS, BLOWS WHISTLE ...)

SCENE 8

(THOMAS EPISODE #8 -- "JAMES AND
THE COACHES")

SCENE 9
(INT. WORKSHOP)

(STACY, DAN, KARA, AND MR.
CONDUCTOR)

STACY:

I'm afraid we're going to
need more than boot laces
to solve out problem.

DAN:

We need to be inventive.

KARA:

Just like the driver was
with James.

STACY:

And we'd better act fast.
El Schemo is getting more
popular every minute.
Listen.

(IN ARCADE, SCHEMER IS LEADING THE
CROWD IN A RESPONSIVE CHANT.)

SCHEMER:

EL SCHEMO!

CROWD:

EL SCHEMO!

SCHEMER:

HE'S A DREAM-O!

CROWD:

HE'S A DREAM-O!

SCHEMER/CROWD:

GIVE SHINING/
TIME STATION/
TO HIM!

(RESUME - WORKSHOP)

SCENE 9 (CONT'D)

KARA:

He's a dream-o? Yuck.

DAN:

They think he's magical.
(beat)
But you really are
magical, Mr. Conductor.

STACY:

Dan's right. Will you
help up get El Schemo off
the team-o?

MR. CONDUCTOR:

I have an idea. But it's
kind of risky. If it
backfires, things could
be worse than ever.
Still, let me see what I
can do.

(HE DISAPPEARS, UNDER --)

CROWD/SCHEMER (OS):

Give Shining/
Time Station/
To him!

SCENE 10

(INT. JUKE BOX - DRESSING ROOM)

(THE PUPPETS ARE SEATED, HANGING OUT, DISGRUNTLED.)

DIDI:

This is just great. The station is full of people, but nobody's using the juke box.

GRACE:

Schemer's got them giving money directly to him. He doesn't even need our music.

REX:

I miss playing, Tex.

TEX:

You and me both, Rex.

(TITO SUDDENLY SHRIEKS. DIDI TURNS TO HIM.)

DIDI:

What's your problem?

TITO:

What if he stays El Schemo forever, and turns this juke box into one big piggy bank.

(BEAT. ALL SUDDENLY SHRIEK.)

SCENE 11
(ARCADE)

(A BIT LATER. SCHEMER IS LOUNGING ON THE THRONE, SIPPING A BIG FROTHY OVERDONE DRINK AND CALLING OUT TO THE LINE OF CUSTOMERS AT THE FORTUNE TELLING MACHINE.)

SCHEMER:

Hey, single file there.

PASSENGER 3:

How come the machine
isn't talking?

SCHEMER:

It writes notes. It
doesn't talk.

(SUDDENLY GINNY, MIDGE, AND THE MAYOR ARRIVE, STEAMING. MIDGE IS COVERED WITH PINK CALAMINE LOTION.)

MIDGE:

Schemer --

GINNY:

El Schemerino --

MAYOR:

Mister Eskimo --

MIDGE:

You have some explaining to do. I took your advice, and pulled up all that poison ivy. But it didn't submit to my design. It made me break out all over!

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

GINNY:

I bought that used truck you told me to, and the thing conked out two miles from the lot. It needs a new transmission, mister!

MAYOR:

And I ... against my better judgment ... I did what you said. I told the town council that unless they gave me my pay phone in the park, they couldn't come to my birthday party. And do you know what happened?

SCHEMER:

I predict you're going to tell me.

MAYOR:

(impressed)

Why yes! I am. How did

--
(snaps out of it)
They were so offended, they told me I couldn't come to their birthday parties, and then they passed a law saying I had to eat lunch in my office!

(ALL THREE START BABBLING AT ONCE AS STACY, KARA AND DAN ARRIVE.)

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

Uh, maybe you didn't do
it right --
(grandly)
El Schemo will explain!
(as himself; panicky)
Don't blame me. This
isn't the future. THE
future isn't here yet.
(grandly)
Ordinary people!
Silence!
(all grow quiet)
I will consult with the
Beyond. All of you --
put more money into the
machine!

GINNY:

This one's on you,
Schemer.

(HE REACTS, DIGS OUT A NICKEL, GOES
TO MACHINE AS OTHERS CROWD AROUND.)

(INSERT: IN MACHINE, WE SEE MR.
CONDUCTOR, IN COSTUME, REPLACE THE
MANNEQUIN FACE.)

(RESUME - SCHEMER ADDRESSES THE
CROWD.)

SCHEMER:

El Schemo reminds you
that the machine will
issue a note which I will
interpret. The machine
itself, of course --

(PUTS NICKEL IN)

-- does not speak.

MR. CONDUCTOR:

What do you want, El
Schemo?

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:
(terrified, bleats)

HAH? Uh, um, it talks!
Tell me of the future, o
talking machine!

MR. CONDUCTOR:

You cannot see the
future. Nor can I. The
future is unknowable.

(THE CROWD REACTS.)

SCHEMER:

Um--ha ha! What a joker!
El Schemo admires your
sense of humor--

MR. CONDUCTOR:

You misled these people
for your own private
gain. You told them
fibs, to get their money.
Shame!

SCHEMER:

Well, I--you know, I made
a few guesses about some
things--

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Your explanations of my
messages are all wrong.
Your predictions are all
wrong. You are a fraud.

SCHEMER:

Oh yeah? What about
Ginny's tomatoes?

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Are you kidding? That
was a coincidence!

(THE PASSENGERS, MAYOR, GINNY,
MIDGE REACT.)

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

PASSENGER 1:

That's the last time I ever spend one cent in your Arcade. You fake.

SCHEMER:

An evil spirit has taken over the machine! El Schemo predicts --

PASSENGER 2:

You lied to us.

(ALL START LEAVING THE ARCADE AS THE GLARE AT SCHEMER.)

SCHEMER:

Who are you going to belieEve? Some stupid talking machine? or El Schemo himself?

(ANGLE ON MAIN AREA -- STACY, DAN AND KARA WATCH.)

DAN:

I almost feel sorry for him.

KARA:

Almost.

SFX: TRAIN WHISTLE.

(STACY'S EYES LIGHT UP. SHE DASHES ONTO THE PLATFORM.)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Schemer...?

SCHEMER:

Can't you be quiet for two minutes?

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Are you ready to
apologize to everyone?

SCHEMER:

Apologize? El Schemo?
Ha ha ha!

(ALL FALL SILENT, LOOK AT SCHEMER,
THEN TURN THEIR BACKS ON HIM AND
WALK AWAY. SCHEMER TRIES TO LURE
THEM BACK.)

SCHEMER (CONT'D):

But perhaps El Schemo
will apologize. If he is
asked nicely.

(THE CROWD CONTINUES TO IGNORE HIM
-- AS STACY RUNS IN FROM THE
PLATFORM.)

STACY:

The trains are running!
All aboard!

(ALL JOSTLE PAST SCHEMER AND HEAD
OUT TO THE TRAINS.)

MIDGE:

I never want to talk to
than man again.

GINNY:

I can't believe I fell
for his line of hooey.

MAYOR:
(to Schemer)

And I don't think you
really are an Eskimo.

(THEY LEAVE.)

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

Okay! I apologize! Just
don't hate me! I'm
sorry! Really! (etc..)

(HE PLEADS AS ALL FILE OUT EXCEPT
STACY AND THE KIDS. FINALLY
SILENCE.)

SCHEMER:

Everybody thinks I'm no
good.

STACY:

I wonder why? Could it
be because you lied,
cheated, and stole
people's money?

SCHEMER:

I guess so. But it's no
fun when everybody hates
you.

STACY:

Then have you learned
your lesson about fooling
people?

SCHEMER:

(contrite)

Yes, Miss Jones...

(a glint)

But it was fun while it
lasted.

(to deadpan kids)

I mean, can you believe
those dupes? Thinking
machines can talk and
tell the future?

DAN:

But the machine did talk.

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

Dan, my lad, that was some wise guy passenger hiding in the back. Okay, so he called my bluff. But those chumps really believed it!

KARA:

So the machine really can't talk?

SCHEMER:

Kara, you too? Boy, it's really true, isn't it. A sucker is born every minute. Meet two of 'em.

(ANGLE ON ARCADE - MR. CONDUCTOR APPEARS, STANDING ON MACHINE.)

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Sche-merrr....

(SCHEMER FREEZES, PETRIFIED.)

SCHEMER:

I don't hear that.

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Sche-merr! It is I! The spirit of the machine! I think I'll haunt you for the rest of your life!

SCHEMER:

No! Leave me alone!

MR. CONDUCTOR:

Don't you want me to tell you the future?

SCENE 11 (CONT'D)

SCHEMER:

No! I'm out of the
future business!
AHHHHH--!

(HE TURNS AND FLEES WILDLY TOWARD
THE PLATFORM, TANGLING HIMSELF IN
HIS ROBE AND TURBAN UNTIL HE
MANAGES TO DRAG HIMSELF OUT OF
SIGHT, AS THE OTHERS LAUGH.)

FADE TO BLACK